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# MS 650 Christian Witness in a Multicultural Society

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NOTE: If you think there are too many assignments, you may remove assignment 1: the book response.

Asbury Theological Seminary, Orlando Campus

August 2-6, 2004

Instructor: Ajith Fernando, National Director, Youth for Christ/Sri Lanka

## **CHRISTIAN WITNESS IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY**

This course will be an attempt at developing theology and practice for Christian witness in a multicultural society. We will discuss the content of the Christian message in relation to other views especially in the world's religions. Special attention will be given to the objections to the Christian claim to uniqueness. The subjects will be discussed from the background of involvement in evangelistic ministry. The lecturer has worked with peoples of other faiths for 28 years in Sri Lanka.

### **COURSE OUTLINE**

1. Competing Views on the Issues of salvation and inter-religious relations.  
Religious pluralism, Modernism and Post-modernism  
Religious Fundamentalism  
Liberal Fundamentalism  
Inclusivism and Exclusivism
2. Towards a Christian Approach to other Faiths  
Issues Discussed: respect, humility, tolerance, imperialism, religious freedom, arrogance, servanthood, sensitivity
3. Truth in Other Religions and Getting to Know Other Faiths
4. The Doctrine of God  
The God of the Bible and other gods; Pantheism; Islam; Atheism; Non-Theism; the magical and animistic approaches.
5. Jesus is Absolute Truth  
The Biblical case; responding to the pluralistic view that truth is subjective; incarnation and avatar.
6. The Death of Christ  
Approaches to the death of Christ and objections to the Christian approach to salvation through Christ's death in other faiths
7. The Resurrection in Evangelism

8. Spirituality Christian and Non-Christian

9. Repentance and Judgement? or Karma and Reincarnation?

### **TEXTBOOKS AND READING**

The main textbook will be my book

*SHARING THE TRUTH IN LOVE: HOW TO RELATE TO PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS*

(Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishing, 2001).

The students are expected to read the whole of this book and especially read the sections given below before the class.

Also on reserve at the Library is my book, *The Supremacy of Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1995 or London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1997).

Pre Course Reading: Read Chapters 1-6 in *SHARING THE TRUTH IN LOVE* and come prepared to discuss the material there in class. Also please read the Appendix: Sketches of Other Faiths, which will give necessary background knowledge for class discussions.

An extensive annotated bibliography has been prepared for this course and will be available for the students use.

### **WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS AND SUBMISSIONS**

1. Read a book that presents a different approach to the evangelical one to the issue of pluralism and uniqueness and provide a five-page response to it. The Bibliography, which will be handed out in class, will mention many such books (20% of grade).
2. Submit a reading report of 900 pages read for this course. This includes reading from the textbooks. Please submit a reading report.
3. Do a written project aimed at influencing readers who do not accept the uniqueness of Christ toward accepting it. The project could take the form of an academic paper for a scholarly journal, a semi-popular or popular essay for a "secular" or non-evangelical magazine or newspaper, a stage play, an evangelistic booklet, a series of letters etc.

At the start write a one to two paragraph note describing the audience intended and explaining how your project aims to impact it. (50% of grade).

4. Write a brief outline of a study on the same topic as your first project aimed at teaching Christian lay people. This can be about three to four pages in length. It should present an outline of what you would do if you were teaching this material to Christians. (30% of grade)

The two projects will tackle similar theological truths, but gear the presentations to very different audiences. The first one aims at apologetics or evangelism. The second one aims at edifying and equipping Christians.